

Thousands of People Will Lose Their Health Insurance Every Day We Wait

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MEDIA, PA - With historic healthcare legislation ready to be brought to a vote, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) called on Members of Congress to stay in Washington until passage of a landmark bill that will ensure everyone has health coverage that they can afford and will include the choice of a public option to compete with insurance companies and bring down costs. (Watch his remarks at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUN45p_qFRs) As nothing has been done for the past eight years, more than eight million Americans have lost their health insurance, while costs have skyrocketed -- more than 86 percent during the same period that wages rose only 13 percent. To communicate the urgency with which he and his colleagues must approach this bill, the Congressman spoke on the floor (transcript below) and referred to an experience when his daughter was in the hospital because of a brain tumor and a family with a young boy with leukemia was in the next room, unsure if they could obtain treatment because they could not afford insurance.

“More than 14,000 people every day lose their health insurance - that's about the same as everyone in the city of Allentown losing their coverage every week. We cannot afford to wait any longer,” said Congressman Sestak. “We have a comprehensive Democratic bill that will cover 36 million more Americans and the opportunity to pass the much-needed public option. Now it is time for Congress to keep working until the job is done.”

Here are the full remarks offered by Congressman Sestak on the floor this evening:

“Mr. Speaker, I rise to encourage the House of Representatives to stay in session until this health care bill brought forward this weekend is passed. I do that because about four years ago, I lived down the street in children's hospital with my daughter, struck with a brain tumor. Given just a few months to live when we began her chemotherapy after the brain operation, there was a young boy, two and a half years old diagnosed with acute leukemia next to her, where we heard social workers argue for 6 hours whether that youth whose parents didn't have health insurance could stay.

“I’ve always thought of my 31 years in the military how well we invested here in Congress in our military’s health care plan because of the dividends it gave to me, for example, when I went to an 11.5 month war. And yet my family, my daughter, were taken care of and I was focused on the mission. We lose \$200 billion a year in lost productivity because of the under and uninsured. Our businesses pay an 18 percent tax in higher health care costs because we have not taken action over the last ten years. I urge my colleagues to stay in session because doing nothing is not who we are.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.